

**The Portrait
of a Generation :-**

Robert McAlmon

The Portrait of a Generation

including

The Revolving Mirror

Some of the pieces herein have appeared
in "Poetry" of Chicago, and the Little
Review, to whom thanks are due

200 only of these have been printed, ten
of which are on Vergé d'Arches paper,
numbered 1 to 10, of which this is:

No

Copyrighted by the author
Published by Contact Editions,
Three Mountains Press
Paris, Ile Saint-Louis, Quai d'Anjou, 29

The Portrait of a Generation :-

Robert McAlmon

THE PORTRAIT OF A GENERATION.

THE REVOLVING MIRROR.

FRAGMENTS AND MISCELLANY.

Italy is a Morgue.
When Francisca.
The papers said, a lovely lady—interred.
Blizzard.
Away.
Hippopotamus
Katherine, come with me.
Steel Projectile.
The sea.

JEWELS, VEGETABLES AND FLESH.

Vegetables.
The Market.
The black cat loops designs.
Completion.
Animal dynamo velocity.
The Bullfight.
Why not pull a tiger's tail.
Café Girls.
The Brothers.

CONTEMPORARY IRRITATIONS AND DIDACTICS.

Law.
Landscape.
Justice to all Nations.

THE REVOLVING MIRROR

To have as heritage

SPACE !

and nothing less.

More,

an immensity of snows,
forests,

lakes and cities.

Nothing within but time,

butterfly days

between

day's platinum

night's ebony

pillars

pouring all entity and events

into constricting tubes.

"Not in Europe or America are we at home"
he said in a wistful manner.

"We, that ostracized portion
of degenerate mankind
which lives on the continent
criticizing our home countries."

"The family of course is a
decaying institution.
We don't go in for dutifully
pretended affections now.

What we want is an aristocracy of the intelligence.
Not the hard French face,
so disillusioned.
Not the wooden English visage,
prizing rudeness as a social asset.

"Nothing left.
There really is nothing left
for them,
or for reckless American
flapper-impulsive need
to keep rushing about."

Space
without tradition

or direction.
Swirled in the dynamic maelstrom,
human steeldust.
Lithe voiced electricity.
Broadcast :
the nation mourns his honoured death.

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE :

One cannot stay forever in one place.
A rainy day depresses or the sun is stark.
You write from Paris or the South of France
en route to where,
as he is planning then a trip to Spain
or Warsaw.

Both are machines.
Both go on, each one an automaton,
and thus successfully reduced
is speech and gesture to the mechanism.

You say much the same thing
of London and of Paris
you both have said before.

He recalls your strawpale hair,
 your brittle voice machine-conversing,
 allotted speeches, no neglect,
 a social sense of order,
 a sharp dry voice
 speaking through smoke and wine,
 a voice of litheness ;

 a hard, a cold, a stern white body.
 Someday your ankles, thin, so trim,
 must break with walking,
 as your brittle voice now—almost—
 breaks with talking.

There's much distinction in your pallor
 and your houndish rigid leanness.

If you wear silver,
 things that glisten,
 then your blue-mist face and blue steel eyes
 have even more abstraction,
 one that glitters.

Ah yes,
 you got the old intolerance of Paris nights.
 You soon became depressed.
 Someone, again as always,
 was immediately tiresome.

The dynamo runs down.
 There's a polished metal glitter.

Our neolithic ancestors arrived in Scandinavia
 in the year 10,000,000—behind aleph ;
 set in space at great velocity, singing
 some little known songs of common birds,
 and we go hunting with the camera, stalking
 shy skyscrapers.

There are too the prizewinning super-dread-
 naughts
 of the insect world,
 wasps that hunt spiders.

ROMANCE I.

He was a massive Italian labourer
 and worked at the stone quarry.
 One day a flying bit of stone struck him.
 Brought to the hospital
 the doctor thought he was faking
 and shoved an ammonia-soaked sponge
 to his nostrils.
 "That'll bring him out of it."
 He did not react.

Nurses undressed that gorilla of a man.
 They got a shock.
 His body was shaved.
 He had on women's chemise
 with ribbons at his breast.
 He had on lady's silk stockings.
 A surprise that to the nurses,
 and they get used to a good deal.

Two days later he died,
 and the governor's wealthy brother
 paid all funeral expenses.

Facts then ! This is a fact !
 seduce it.
 The seduction is a fact.
 lubricate it ?
 Let things be dizzy ?

a fact erected as a fact
 as architecture good bad
 or indifferent
 with no passionate need of conviction

The innocent viciousness of a machine.
 a chaste thing,

awaiting
 the pale impending day
 to be set in motion.
 A thing acting upon a thing.
 The sunlight—a thing—
 affecting you—a thing—
 as you came across the room
 with the thing, sprightly, laughter,
 saying with gay irony—
 "This thing I have learned :
 to be proud not to be proud.
 Sophisticated love knows no shame."
 So little does everybody—thing
 signify for whatever kind of ideas."

ROMANCE II.

Karen, you are a soft young swan,—
 no, not a swan,—
 snow-bosomed—
 but not as snow—
 warm, caressable, rather,
 a still, a soft,
 a drolly, youngly, awkward thing.
 Muse, white one,

don't listen to the others.
 They are not tender.
 Why not, with your luminous pallour,
 the liquid glimmer of expectant open lips,
 do as you will?
 Don't become stodgy.
 Look at me now,
 and show the animal-sensual gleam
 of your fawnlike eyes,
 but gentle, stupid, fawn-haired darling,
 be only as you will.
 Young one, promising beauty,
 tell them all,
 father, brother, your bethrothed,
 they need not advise or interfere,
 that you are free.
 Say then,
 that fewer years, your way,
 will never irk you
 as their promised feathered nest.
 Let me too ache for you.
 Be only as you will.

When cultures cross
 and civilization—
 that thin semi-imaginary zig-zag line

written where and who knows how—
 dies,
 there is industry
 flower of ice—
 eyed hope.
 Dangling against the structure
 pulp
 sixteen million bellies.

Plan your progress
 to
 transformation of experience
 and thought.

"The chief idiot openly denounced the sub-
 ject, vocational guidance.
 and the whole gang of critics shouted with
 rage.

"A ridiculous madman
 a pure lunatic.
 I fight single handed,

tutor to under-intelligent and
 mostly imbecilic fools,

who don't know what the question is about.

Times becomes paramount !

HISTORICAL REMINISCENCE.

"Of course Mary had French in her
and she was gay. She needed it in those days.
Darnley, you know, was a homosexual.
Yes..... O didn't you know ?
Page boys and all that sort of thing.
She fell in love with him
and made him marry her and of course
he did the best he could but
that wasn't much I fancy.
All so interesting and tragic
and that sort of thing you know.

"O the man's a classic, I think, just
like all of these people,
Flaubert, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*
and that sort of thing you know."

Our changing maps
diluted borders

Look for an abstract vision
of motor trucks
in traffic
a swirling petalled chrysanthemum.

The iron ore resources
of Lapland and Siberia
are practically untouched.
We are but at the beginning,
and the Northpole must be ours.

EMPHATIC DECISION I.

"There's Mussolini. He couldn't do it,
not in OUR country.
Hand across the chest. Five minutes posturing
with a hypnotizing gaze at the audience.
(He likes being photographed wearing
that mesmeric stare).
And his saying, "I hold Rome
in the hollow of my hand."
So mob-masterful.
AND the spaghetti eaters gobble that bull.
If he lasts it's all they're worth.
Why, in OUR country we'd throw eggs at him

the second minute of his paralyzing look.
We know all about traveling hypnotists.

"He's a barnstorming Napoleon,
a ham statesman. But that's what makes
History so grand,
history so grand.

WHAT DOES ONE DO ?

Space is so often warped
and time distorted,
and we have no sixth sense
to realize the fourth dimension,

and so be
"a pulse of light,
traveling in a vacuum
to and fro."

What does one do ?

Take the train ?
Go away,
to Italy, to Greece,
to the seaside, to the mountains.

In Ana-Capri there are old people
who have never seen Capri.
In North Stockholm
are humans who have never crossed the river.
In London there are many
who know no further than ten blocks from home.

"But the world is a small place after all,
but yes," she said.

Stepping in society
steeped in society
she's stepping out among'em.

"Yes, I will have a drink.
Barman, a martini, *très sec*.

"They liked my songs,
and he—a gay old boid 'e wuz—
'e says, 'girlie when ah likes a skirt
I spend,' and we had caviar, and god knows what not.
And all the champagne I wanted.
I didn't tell him my gown was given to me,
and 'e sez, sez 'e, "girlie, yer a bit on in years,
but you got the style I likes."

"I met the grand duchess and god knows who.
 I met a princess and a duke, and god knows who else.
 The grand duchess liked me I can tell you.
 She asked me to sing for her.
 She wanted to take me home in her car,
 and when I got out she squeezed my hand with a horny paw,
 and "you don't really like me" she said.
 I didn't put my windshield up either.
 She said she liked dope better than drink,
 but she'd sampled her share of the champagne.
 "I met—yes, do give me another martini—
 god knows who,
 his nibs and his nobs, and they all had money.
 Not that they gave me any. They liked my songs.
 His 'ighness liked me. He likes sea captains
 but he liked me. Said my bottom was like a boys.
 I'm going to tea tomorrow at the princesses,
 and I'm going to meet, god knows who.
 There'll be plenty to drink anyway.
 They like me. They're bored, that's it.
 and when they asks me to sing 'em my songs
 I says ,why not. Hell, they give me good feeds
 and all I wants to drink.
 I'll meet—God knows who.
 Anyway I'll look grand. Four evening gowns.
 I wish to the devil one of them would give me

a dress for the daytime. But I got five pounds today.
 That won't get me to London, so I had a bath
 and washed my neck.

"Let's call up the princess.
 She's probably bored and will ask us out to dinner."

ROMANCE III

"Not modern ! He has persecution mania, inferiority complex, paranoia, complex against authority, reads the Russians, or did, thinks eavesdroppers trail him, and that people wish to poison him. He hates women, has three children though he isn't married, and becomes tenderly talkative about life in a worried manner at the slightest provocation to confidential intimacy, particularly when drinking. A most untrustworthy friend though, poor thing, when no one needs friendship more. A difficult nature. I suppose he has genius. But it's this way with me, I like the middle classes, the very high or the very low, but this snobbism about the bourgeois, and these people who are cynical about spirituality ! It is all so limited, really, you must admit. There is something in what I say ?"

"Time and knowledge to do the thing."

A negative standpoint.

Glimmering through the black background :

"Write now and then. I feel lonely."

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE RESUMED.

You said of Deauville it was hectic,
full of gambling and the world's best boobs.
When you left for quiet days it rained.
That was a vile trick of nature.

Critically to mention

the general idea

interpreted

so the public

("We don't know such people.

They are not received by the
best people.")

gets it

(putting it across,

I mean to say. Pep.)

O HELL !

and in writing

(not plastic like the
other arts)

indeed

we do so often feel that way,
don't we ?

sociologically reduced

it's protective mechanism
the Vassar girls are taught.

but when one feels so strongly
the need to serve ?

but one must believe in things.

The general Idea,
it is better to—

Yes, yes.

They shine,
much the same way,
always,

that is
the stars,

pinpricking lights
 explaining nothing or attempting.
 Happy blues, bluesky, bluemoon
 sky laws

Ah Droll. Questionable ?
 but SO REAL,
 I mean to say.

THE GENERAL IDEA

"For the masses
 life is organized around work.

"It is Americanism.
 The great adventure,
 not death, but
 fitting into
 today's
 complicated system of life.

No self-respecting American—"

"The whole idea
 bears down on us
 with preventable unhappiness.
 It is stupidity and cowardice, not discipline."

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE RESUMED.

From Amalfi came, forwarded,
 one of your pencil scribbled notes :
 "—distracted today, so much needing
 something, anything, to do. BUT
 not sick with misery, even though
 one feels so much insecure, and nothing lasting.
 —and wonder of you,
 do you care for me, ever so little,
 if only, and better too, as a friend ?
 —thinking too of books
 one hoped might fill the gap.
 Baedekers,—Pizzaro, nursed by a sow,
 taunted by gold, who died a tyrants death.
 —and what you said of Buddha, Mohammed,
 fatalism—and remembering, delightedly,
 your asking that awful prig
 'don't you ever feel abandoned ?' You Dear !
 You are a dear.
 —thinking, so irrelevantly of so many things,
 and all of them trivial,—but no.
 I won't permit things to be that.

"but if you were here to talk to.

That, bless you, you darling,
could so much matter, if you were not
antagonistic. (Why will you have those moments
towards me? You who understand me
so much better than I do myself?)

"And I haven't forgotten that lovely night
in Naples. I'm thinking of Athens, Athos—
why can I not go there?— and the East.
And we must meet soon somewhere.
Where will it be? For you, where next?"

Not by the sea,
the forest,

through the golden grass
clean buttocked
deer appear
luminously curious.

The wind blows faint scent
from the dowager's bosom
as her motor arrests for a camera study.
Does the mating buck not know
whom he stamps his challenge at?

ROMANCE IV.

"I guess I'm a failure
and I was so sure I wouldn't be.
O well, I'll just have to take out my ideals
on having children Cripes yes,
if there's a guy who'll marry me.
Hey, listen Barroom!
Who wants this two-ton of gorgeous flesh
cheap and quick?"

Coloratura prima-donna, calling herself
the long-distance drinker of the world
she gorged in her infantile exhibitionism.
"I'll buy drinks for the gang.
Merde, my check came today
and I might as well be peddling
this gorgeous body on the boulevards tomorrow.
.Gosh, I ain't had so much fun
since the day ma caught her tit in the wringer.

"But say, I'm kinda stinkweary
drinking my gut sore.
I'd almost go back home to mamma if I knew
I could get back, but I can't pull no jesuschrist
and walk across the water.

"Hey Jerry ! Come and lift me.
I like big strong rough men.

and' don't nobody highhat me.
God only made one me and here you have it.
Jhaysus, where do I get this roughstuff ?
I'll Ritz the lot of you though.
Just wait till I'm dragging them in by carloads
at the Metropolitan Opera."

But good French cooking is too well seasoned.
It spoils the game taste of the duck.

Destroy to create.
Create to destroy.

Through the black background glimmering

Hummingbird days
the unemployment dole
wreckling England, plunged profoundly
to revolution
cold blackdeep the masses
headlong to percussive disconstruction.

Standing on Woolworth at midnight
moonning

the spectacular panorama
marvelous humanity in flux
I heard a body fall.

The loon of a foghorn
boomed on the bay.

White pillars of wild moonlight
white streaks of falling bodies
continually falling
glistening flakes of lighted night.

When cultures cross

*let you ceriseblood calm its throb.

The condor twists a worty neck and sings.
In the steel rafters of the Grand Central terminal
machinery is signing lyric-crashingly dramatic.

Time as simultaneity of action
you on this planet in 12,000 B C
and who now sympathising
with a detached intelligence.

of a night gale roaring.
 Sleep.
 How easily bored we are
 till the world's rolled over.

ROMANCE VI.

When the ship was burning in the port
 and apt to start other conflagrations
 the government had it towed further out,
 and shots put into the hulk to sink it.

Divers plugged the damaged portions, and openings,
 with concrete, and then the pumps were used.
 As the water was drawn out the hulk arose.
 It would not have been sea-going according to our
 terms
 but a coffer damn was built about the damaged part
 and filled with Portland Cement. Had a strong storm
 been encountered the boat would have sunk,
 but the two tow boats were near, and men placed on
 the ship
 for steering could have been rescued.

It took four months to tow the boat home.
 It cost £ 30.000 in all, repairs and wreck cost,

but the same boat, to rebuild, would cost £ 90.000
 We got twenty years efficient service out of her.
 There were other boats one got by bidding
 at a crucial moment.

Of course it takes courage to take these chances.
 Not everybody has the imagination,
 that is, the daring—er—if I do say it myself,
 the business— that is, the foresight and acumen.

That boat was an investment. I mean,
 we had what I might call, that is I mean to say,
 extraordinary service from them all,
 and that boat we sold for two-thirds cost to us
 after twenty years of service.
 That was an investment.
 There have been others. But it takes
 thinking ahead. I mean to say,
 not everyone has the daring.

By the sea most sexual sea
 society brilliant and cultured
 stepping in society
 for decades across the
 ohso-abso-bloody-lutely
 bright smart tables

"and who have we now ?

"then there was a manner.

"the brighter days of salons

"All, my poor dear, is commerce,
rightly, I fear, we all can be called
a race of shopkeepers,

"He is difficult but a genius.
We must accept much
Of our few great men.

"Someone who can be brightly rude,
like a gentleman, never accidental."
"BUT SO ironic."

ice crystal cave
electro-magnetic volcanic glacier

the surge of machinery surges

Them damned niggers.
Ah likes ah likes theah jazz
plain lowdown

sneaky
incriminating
music
to dance to
line mass
form
in motion
in a choppy
but forward catapulting
syncopated direction.
Blocks sound structure tumbling
toy blocks of sound
toy built
falling and falling and falling.

ROMANCE VII.

Mexican Maria,
old, toothless, half blind,
unable to masticate her food,
she would not be one
to notice Tony's mood of anger.

What good was she as chief witness
at Martha's murder trial ?
Had she ever seen to recognize the axe ?

Besides,
 what if a greaser does kill his wife
 in lower Mexico.
 Them and the Chinks if it ain't the niggers,
 them and their dirty stunt
 a' taking a white man's food out of his mouth
 wit' der werkin' fer nuttin'.

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE RESUMED.

Perhaps, you thought from Italy,
 by some new sea
 you could take your fever
 and drown it.
 O, but you were sick
 and nauseated with misery.

One of the men :
 "Waiting for my hour of freedom,
 for genius I do not have,
 and for you, loveliest Lydia,
 to come and sit
 across the table from me."

"So perfectly expresses what
 London makes us all feel."

Mercy, such tea !
 How can they call it tea ?
 Do you suppose they boil their water ?
 There is tea that is tea, my dear,
 and there is tea that is an insult.
 What I wouldn't do for a real cup
 of our own English tea.
 Travel is so disheartening on the continent.
 There are none of them that know how to make
 a cup of honest tea."

ROMANCE VIII.

"Bother my deafness.
 I'm too old and fat to watch traffic.
 What's a man for ? Anyway I'm a fatalist,
 and if I'm to be hit by a truck— — —

"It's as I've always told Fred.
 The only way to happiness for me
 is straight on through to death, or hell.
 Then there will be no ache.
 You young thing ! You are stone.
 You can't understand how I feel.
 I'm not clever myself but I adore clever people.

No, I shall refuse to see them all,
say what you will. I am better off alone
if those that are mine will not stay by me.
After all I have given up for you.

The twisted twilight hours
no longer twitter.
Over the downs a tall wind
menaces the chalk cliffs,
and sheep are inclined to huddle.

"Why have I stood the place for thirty years ?
I have always hated it
and its downs falling over one.
This tyranny of servant-routine.
It is him and his "keeping up appearance".
Don't I understand how you feel !
Why won't he let people alone
to plan their own lives ?
What do any of us get out of it all at best ?"

Perhaps it was the absinthe
the day he was afraid.
Hallucinations ? but afraid.
Because the trees are growing.
Because the sun is shining.

"Just afraid," he whispered.
"Are you never afraid ? You,
with your clear eyes and skin.
You think you're very superior
with your easy laugh. I can laugh too."

HISTORICAL REMINISCENCE.

Those great days of blood and lust
when father raped daughter
and son raped brother,
while all men rushed without breeches
into battle,
committing buggery and fornication
with great gusto
all whilst on horseback.

Those violent days were better.
The times of such a grand indifference
to life and feeling.

When Grifonette in dying
chose the main piazza for the scene
stretching his shapely limbs
coldly upon the cold ground

so Greekly lovely
 thus to take his mother's kiss forgiving.
 They were all so lovely
 lying with their bedmates
 without too much discrimination
 an elderly English stranger told me
 and his eyes were aglitter.

What's all that to those
 too often drunk at Zelly's, Paris,
 where Denise, the reedlike golden lady,
 a syphilitic sylph (the others say)
 and five years gone with high consumption,
 is a peril, however flushed with beauty.
 Yet, she steps high, she picks her trade,
 she never looks pathetic.

The surge of machinery
 surges.

The neurotic machines are restless.
 Tiredness drives them.

ROMANCE IX.

The few diners sipped dago red
 knowing Kate's barytone and trick whistle.

Her *Espagnole* sang to the ethers
 over a puff of smoke, after a tough joke,
 was old stuff.
 Kate didn't bother to pretend she wasn't bored either.
 Upon re-sitting she remarked to her brother,
 "You're a dirty pimp."
 Only when her blond friend agreed
 was her brother moved.
 "Go to hell. Yer the lowest thing on earth."
 But the Blond was more specific.

Of course chivalry overcame Kate
 and she hit him with a bottle
 for insulting her friend,
 and for getting fresh with a young girl diner.
 He came too though, and the cops
 let things pass,
 in this neighborhood and joint.

But old Kate didn't have the fire
 of the old days on the Barbary Coast.
 She'd never come into her own again,
 not since the earthquake.

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE RESUMED.

You sent a card that stated simply
 the first few days were not so bad—
 those after ! !!
 and what did one think of Giotto ?

“The energy we must look for in the future
 will come from Russia, China, the Americas.”

Shot from tubes,
 modern as tomorrow,
 The New Conscience
 The New Consciousness.

He is so completely sensitized
 to the velocity of a jelly fish
 shimmying like the jelly on the plate
 shimmering with hummingbird sensi-
 vity

“What we want are statistics.
 Facts. Not theories.

“To show that a man here
 is where he is because

we must be scientific.
 Chart it. It's mathematics.
 Nothing but.
 “Elimination is this season's keynote,
 in art, and for the smartly groomed.”
 The stylish mind is worn shorter.”

ROMANCE X.

A specialist in relativity
 who spoke of Einstein's dynamic eyes
 he walked in the late night hours
 talking of Boehme's mystic sense.

He spoke of music
 which so well becomes a man
 of mathematical talents.
 He might give up science to compose.
 Music is less confusing.
 There the senses can aspire.

Finally, “One gets discouraged
 with the species, but really,
 it is amazing, not that the human race
 is so backward, but that it is so far ahead.
 That we are, able to know we are,

after the mud it all began with.
 It is not only us,
 but the universe
 stamped with imperfections
 evolving together."

"England economically is in decay."
 "France too—"
 "And Italy, a stinking corpse
 with a psychopathic dictator
 playing at tragédie farce."

"What we need is statesmanship and vision of
 breadth."
 "The reason America does not own Cuba.
 is the goddamned people in Cuba."
 "A little of the old nobility of conviction."
 "The west Indies on the other hand
 swarm with savages."
 "England has done her best for Jamaica."
 "Prohibition will never come to France."
 "Paris is an American city."

"To hell with the whole problem."

Bathtubs all the way down the corridor,
 and pillars to hide behind.

Caught by her wireless appeal,
 "What does one do?"

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE RESUMED.

One cannot stay forever in one place.
 Agreeing that you needed sunshine
 you encountered, zestfully to walk
 against the wind,
 though revolt held over still
 so that in necessary acquiescence
 some of the old young priceless arrogance
 could say :

"I DO NOT KNOW."

Coccu, the Spanish dancer
 said the world was nuts,
 and she was blue.
 She drank too much,
 arranged her smokey hair
 and said
 in spite of money
 that her present lover
 would not do.

HISTORICAL REMINISCENCE :

"No, the conservatives will complete their term.
 The Zinovieff letter, you know.
 It gave them a tremendous majority and a standing.
 Not that I approve the practice,
 but letters are opened, and photographed.
 The letter is delivered in the same mail
 at any event. But in this case
 the photograph was taken in Russia.
 An English secret agent.
 He should not have given, or sold—
 that is, I assume he got at least £ 1000,
 as a matter of wager I'd say he got £ 5000,—
 for the second photograph he took and sold
 to the *Daily Mail*. It wasn't selfish.
 It placed the good of the country before *Kudos*,
 and wired the story to every paper in the Kingdom.
 The Labour Party never made a direct denial.
 McDonald, an able man, above the ordinary run,
 rather took the attitude that the letter was no forgery,
 and the Daily Mail waited for the Foreign Office to act
 or for the Labour Party to repudiate.
 There was no action.

One might surmise that an officious underling
 rather than Zinovieff wrote the letter.
 But actions were being taken in accordance
 to instructions in the letter.
 It changed the electoral vote of the whole country.

"But in this case the letter was photographed
 in Russia, not in England. A clever secret agent.

"It's a difficult period.
 There is no party we can trust.
 We can't even trust our own foresights these days.
 It's all very difficult and we don't get younger".

"Need there be satirists

galling and more bitter than,"
 heretofore,
 since humanity is always with us,
 and newspapers dealing with
 the 'cerebrations of unorganized ganglia ?'

Appearing between busses, in heavy traffic,
 slight bodies, red lips, thin lovely faces,
 smoke-tinctured Aphrodites divinely restless,
 ruthless and chaste machines.

"The American continent
has been the seat
of three civilizations
which as spectacles of magnificence,
for ruthless bigotry,
and sentimentality in all its insentient cruelty,
compete with all ages and locations."

Do not ask questions.

Ride upwards in a limousine
there to sit on the right side
of the girl with the glad smile
in *Pollycrucifixion*.

Seeking the word

Motors that breath
that surge of hushed power
adumbrating with intuition.

ROMANCE XI.

The aged man said his morning prayer
and read the bible.

He knew there were whispers in his ear.
Forever a monkey talked to him of lust,
inciting him to vice.

Particularly through the night hours
the monkey urged him,
scold as he might it persisted.

He died while the rabbits in the madhouse garden
nibbled cabbages and lettuce.
Their rodent eyes were always prone
to wear a mean, unclean, all rodent look of terror.

In the music room the mad composer
worked upon his famous opera,
while others conquered battles,
were brilliant courtesans or statesmen.

Yep, two more whiskies.
Call this a nighcap? Nah.
Throw it into yuh.
Let's stay out all night.
It'll be raining tomorrow.
And Sunday, what to hell!

We might as well sour bellyache
together, in good company.

EMPHATIC DECISION II.

"Bordeaux, ah yes, wonderful place. Not quite sea port.
More open. More of the salt and bread attitude.
I kept a taxi a whole day and was drunk.
The taxi driver drank with me. He asked fifty francs.
An attractive chap too. Not so rough as Marseilles.
More of the salt and bread attitude, you know.

"At a bistro—I didn't know I would do it.
I thought I didn't believe in anything any more,
but it was a bit too much for even me.
It wasn't the justice point I stood on,
but the injustice thing, and you know,
those Bordeaux French stood back of me.
These French are topping you know.

"I was in a bistro, and an American sailor
was bullying one of these cringing Lascars, you know.
There's not much to be said for them, but after all,
in France, one place in the world
where the colour thing is looked at sanely
it was too much.
The sailor was bullying that slinking, cowed, Lascar,
and shouting about how they treated blacks in America.

I didn't like it.

It rather took away from one's enjoyment of one's
drink,

and a man doesn't want to watch that,
when he's just having a sociable drink, you know.
Not that, so far as attraction, I wasn't drawn to the
sailor,

a fine, upstanding brute, rather upsetting
with his showing his physique all over the place,
but it was too much when he got hold of a whip
and begin brandishing it at the Lascar.

"So I got a gendarme and came back in a cab,
and addressed the Frenchmen in sentimental bad French.
I mentioned Lyautey and how little his activities
in Morrocco had been rewarded. They were on my side.
The American Sailor was put out of the Bistro,
and warned.

I didn't talk justice. They don't fall for that,
but I must say they don't like injustice.
After that the town was mine.
Anything I did was not indiscreet afterwards,
they just had to be discreet about not noticing.

"Not that I'd take up the same colour question
in England, but in France—capital fellows.

O yes, Bordeaux is capital.
The salt and bread attitude, you know.

NEUROTIC CORRESPONDENCE FINISHED.

You wrote, suggesting that,
much as you understood poor droll Harold
when he quavered with fluttery hand gestures
"How ghastly life is. So Tragic."
times were not as bad as last year.
Rector too now irritated you with his
"giving up the verdigris of living profitably."
You would make plans.
He was a cerebralizing monster
perhaps a little cracked with boredom.

There is so much distinction in your pallor.

The Grand Central Terminal Art Gallery
exhibits pictures by contemporaries
who WANT ten thousand dollars for their paint-
ings.

Martha: Will not take no for an answer.
Am going to call and see you. Fred.

KYZ. Rome was not built in a day.
You give up too easily. EZ

I don't know.
The German mark is buried
while the Austrian crown
has given a Chinese banquet
to a Turkish prince pretender.

till the tide one day
sets all the earth to waving
so that billows
bear much down and back and under
and shot from tubes
modern as tomorrow
by engines that breathe

White gay stone and tall black marble,
gold-mounted,
and orange flickering traffic
through grey rumblings.

Crush near
press of machine amour,
the flood of your flux
to mesmerize the conscious.
May the amber moon, enchanted,

find high towers to meditate upon.

Like incessant rain,
as a phantom pain

Steel-brittle Aphrodite of machinery
wandering through skyscrapers,
Platinum-precious huntress
insatiable.

A SENTIMENTAL REMEMBRANCE (literary manner)

If I recall you now

not for beauty or mind
you linger,

but for a posture
as you sat one day
high upon a cliff above the sea
looking no way
but captured by bewilderment
forever a little tired.

An unconquered you,

not dreaming,
and not disorganized whatever you desired,
a wilful rejector
of so much experience,

that you was stark
with the darkness of your own
coldly drenched expectancy,

untouchable
and complete.

THE END.

Fragments And Miscellany

1924

Italy is a morgue
of mirrors remembered
vaguely recalling
history reflections.

The hills and olive trees
we see
remembering poetry

fever of mirrors
in a distorted
many coloured chamber,
Subterranean,
where lights go on and off.

Softly the mist upon the vine sends silver.
Far upon the mountain path a peasant calls,
instinct with music as a singing bird...

1919

When Francisca
 young
 blithely a sinuous flame
 came from San Luis Obispo
 she burned upon my heart's
 tender impressionability
 an image of flashing carnal whiteness
 sweet with caprice
 that made dark moments
 shroud me with yearning gloom.

Today, again,
 a memory distant gesture
 darkened with forboding mood of sweetness
 the quick neurotic present
 of my restless life.
 She'd grown gross, of flesh and visage,
 but the smile across her eyes,
 her tone of laughter gaily taunting
 quicken'd my heart throb
 set my nerves to tingling.
 Memory never does have done.

1922

The papers said
 a lovely lady, who,
 two-thousand years interred,
 was so preserved by gasses,
 that, unearthed,
 her gorgeous flesh shone at the sun
 in all its painted jewel-decked splendour,
 yet in the sunlight for a minute,
 and her form,
 crumbled like snow forms and was ashes.

BLIZZARD (1920)

Outside the sleet screams
 a cold barbaric symphony,
 iced blue.
 Its shriek is cold hard steel
 in the brittle ice of me.

If there is not sleep,
 if there is not cessation of sound
 as of hungry wolf-packs howling,
 or deep escape
 in the breaking of madness
 how do ears not split with hearing ?

AWAY (1920).

The blue heron flies north
 in the frozen sky, that floats,
 an ether iceberg
 on the cold white plains.

Over the snow a winter bird
 has whistled a clear sharp tone.
 Now there is silence
 but the wound of the cry
 quivers upon the sensitive stillness.

The pain of a shadow which is past
 is yet upon the whiteness of the snow.

All of this vastness yearns
 to go somewhere,
 perhaps, and only perhaps,
 to follow the flying bird.

I am here alone.
 The vastness has me,
 and I have no will but its will,

and how, like space,
 I am dispersed.

(1924)

Hipposotomus in the slime,
 elephant in the wild grass,
 listen to the wind-hysterical laughter.
 The lava is rumbling
 over your crater wonderland.

Dry brains are rustling.
 Monkey-gland voices chatter
 over your ancestors' bones.

The gorilla and the ape
 are at this moment silent in the jungle.
 You too be quiet.

(1923)

Katherine, come with me

out to the glittering sands
 to quicksilver mirrors
 seacries are crying

wide wide and wide.

Small Katy
 play with me.

The fishnets are wound in the seawaves.

Mother is calling,
 Kathy,
 but stay, stay with me,

shoveling in the sand
 statues the tide will washover,

here in the sunlight, stay.
 Sea ones are not afraid.

Katherine, come with me.

1922

Steel projectile

pointed, redhot,
I threw it.

Yes, now I know
had it struck you
you would have died.

Why were we angry ?
How could we know ?

But its flight was nearly straight.

Steel projectile
sharp through the air
into the wall besides you.

But that was long ago,
and now, should we meet

after these twenty years

we should laugh,
I know

we should laugh,
and you would be tender with memory

Steel projectile !

I should be dumfounded
not wishing to remember
with not quite understanding

and with wishing not to know.

THE SEA (1923).

sway as it may
does not overflow the globe.

brooding upon the shore
waves spawn their species
gelatinous, gaping, ghastly.

Aghast too I go
bearing within me
the aquarium of my gregarious
not too sociable
but over-inquisitive impulses,

and watch through glass
the ocean kind.
Sand sharks
with their giraffe markings
and murderous basilisk eyes.

Shudderingly I gaze
upon a mass unrecognized at first
an octopus entangled
as snakes coiled about a smothered monkey.

It is life,
a form

and the beginning.

A horror of infra-conscious fear
envelops me.

This is too much.
One cannot will to wonder.

Only departure.

The sea
lies calm today upon the earth ;
sure and secure it is
for all external ferment.

JEWELS, VEGETABLES, AND FLESH

Vegetables

and jewelry, rightly displayed,
have an equal amount of fascination.

Carrots, for instance,
piled,
ferntops, bodies and hairroots,
so bound together in bunches,
bunches laid in rows
of oblong heaps with magnitude
are sufficient to arrest any seeing eye.

Cabbages with a purplish tinge,
when of grandeur, with widespread petals,

as they rest in heaps
 catching the dawns' first filtering of sunlight,
 compare satisfyingly with roses enmassed,
 with orchids, sunflowers, tulips,
 or variegated flowers
 extravagantly scattered,

While as to onions
 little can excel their decorative effect
 when green tubes, white bulbs, and grey hairroots,
 rest in well arranged, paralleled piles
 around which buxom women congregate,
 laughing and chattering in wholesome vulgarity.

Crispness
 a cool indifference to the gash of knives,
 to the crush of kind,
 or to any destiny whatever,
 has granted the vegetables an arrogance of identity
 one would be foolhardy to strive after
 with heated impressionable imagination.

Vegetables,
 given their colour,
 scent, and freshness,
 too easily attain a supremacy of being
 for our fumbling competition.

THE MARKET

One passes women laughing,
 aged and sinewed with toil
 yet able to say in this manner :

"It rained last night and I had not eaten.
 I wanted onion soup, but I had no salt or pepper
 and—" with chuckles —"no onions.
 But one eats today or tomorrow, no matter."

There are also the hopeful girls
 with large teeth and badly shaped noses,
 most simian in aspect.
 They offer themselves for prices
 that descend,
 and they are in the end
 quite happy that their coffee and croissants
 have been paid for,
 and that carrots and radishes have been given them
 as a joke. They like such jokes.

But it is the vegetables one would speak of.
 Not of the churches ;
 not of history, or of the ancient art

in wonderful cathedrals ;
not of gold altars and jeweled intricate sculpturing.

It is vegetables,
for they do not mind
very hot water about them.

There they are,
very crisp, not too fresh,
but such nice designs they make.

And one can change flowers bought in a drunken rhapsody
for bouquets of vegetables.

There are always old women,
always rather dirty, comic, cheerful,
very monkey-looking girls in the market
in the early morning, and they are always
ready to suggest that they are ready
to stay
with any man who needs company.

1922

The black cat loops
 designs
across the rug
 up
 draped Chinese curtains,
knocking the parakeets cage,
 ignoring bird fright.
However
 she could not compete
 with the Siamese kitten
whose
 crazy taut-electric antics
 were agile
 with
 race-contemplated contortions
that apes and kings conspired
 in some dim
 evolutionary
 and perhaps fabulous
 past
to cause.
 Draftsman of lines
 that fade while drawn
she ignored her public ;

2 ladies— 1 Man—
 a bemused white dog
 and a cathedral tower
 glowering
 through the open window.

COMPLETION (1922)

Yesterday today was tomorrow.

The goat, bought
 to furnish milk
 for white eskimo puppies,
 cavorted, cutting jerky
 angularities of goat gesture
 oblique to springcold daylight.

Some days later,
 after illness,
 she was wild wonder-eyed,
 but less prankful and horn-tossing.

Even more days later she was dead
 so that no evidence
 of crag leaping dance-capacities
 remained.

She was not then
 amusing to look at.
 She was skin and bones
 without caprice or whimsicality.

She was not anywhere.
 Goats never become angels.

Tomorrow today will be yesterday.

ANIMAL-DYNAMO VELOCITY

Is there pain
of suspense, of decision, of suspicion,
in the gathering rush of massive-muscled flesh ?

Warily, on spring-tendoned legs,
feet prancing on pads,
a stallion regards the wall,
and the moment is pained with expectancy.

It is not the spring of a tiger ;
not the hurtle and massive necked rush
of a bull at a horse in the ring,
when a body, a mixture of hulkish brute
and lithe panther kitten,
charges with power that glitters dazzling black.

The decision is made.
Muscles in the horse's haunches gather,
while speed accumulates to the leap.
The forelegs shoot upward and forward
as the hind legs force forward,
and a long equine length shoots through the air.

A wild goose too,

freed from its box,
shoots to flight with electric spurt,
but, relentless as wild will to release
has made its starting upwards flight,
its savagery of velocity
does not excel that of the panic stricken jack-rabbit
poundingly leaping, kangaroo-manner, over the prairies.

There seems no promise
of attacking power he possesses
in the high-strung police dog
as he twitches and quivers,
pathetic with nerves
and a tenderness of eager curiosity.

It is a dance beyond questioning,
the quivering, the silken rippling,
the lumping, the jerking, rushing, ongoing,
of animal flesh
thrust by a moment's violent impulse
into velocity.

THE BULLFIGHT (1924)

Pageant of flesh, dung, guts, and blood,
the corrida des toros is on.

There is colour, of gold embroidery,
of bright shawls on ladies
popularly famed as beautiful,
and of shining coiffeurs, high combs,
mantillas, all in the sun, the dust,
the wind across the sultry daylight.

(They are meat eaters, these Spaniards.
Four courses of meat, not bull meat, to the meal.
They love siestas.
Spain is one European country which retains
its original race quality and a medieval tang.)

For some moments the aged bony horses
prance processionally in the ring. Then they are listless.
And the gate lifts. The bull is slow to enter,
shocked by light so quick with brilliance on darkness.

With a spurt of enraged expectancy he is in the ring,
and stops with a snap, bewildered.
Bright capes and moving figures daze him.

He charges capes that fall to nothing before his violence.
His bronze-glistening bulk of prehistoric nerves
has taken on the lithe agility of a panther.
Dazedly his eye becomes aware of a horse body taunting
him.

Warily, like a curious tiger kitten sensing danger
the bull sways hesitatingly, and carefully places one foot
ahead slinking the other foot ahead crouching
and then the springing rush is made, massively relentless.
Kicking and trembling the horse goes over the bull's head
and falls back, ripped open, spurting blood.
His hind legs jerk with feeble epilepsy as the bull gores
him.

A stub of horsetail quivers. He is dead.
Other horses in the ring are trembling.
In a fury the bull charges, and kills three horses.
He is a good bull.
The torreros seek refuge.
Blood pours with sunlight over his gold-gleaming body.

The torrero's turn has come.
With adept manipulation of the cape he leads the bull
to charges, back and forth, a quarter round the ring.
The colour has hypnotized the bull's eye.
He stands heaving breath into the dust.

A fog is over his eyes. A whimper is in his challenging
bellow.

His shoulders drip blood.

This is a bull. Not a charge has he refused.
He has torn three horses, and killed four more.
At flash moments he has almost known
that men, and not the coloured banners, torment him.
Not at all has the dumb look of puppy terror-wonder
asking WHY
come to his face. His expression
is a look of dogged wonder trying to be thought.

The torrero, whose thrusts are butchery, has been tossed.
Blood gushes from a badly placed deathstroke in the bull.
Still he fights and charges. His legs weaken.
He staggers and sprawls like a new-born calf.
The charges are feeble, wavering, and heartless.
The toss of his head is a plaint, a "let me alone" protest.

Reluctantly his front legs crumble and fold beneath him.
He slowly lies down, a peaceful cow,
though his head wavers a toss at the approach of a man.
So his head falls to the side. The body rolls over.
It is time for the mule teams and sweepers to clear the ring.
There is a reek of raw flesh and dungish perspiration.

The crowd is happy with excitement.

Over the gold cadaver a hot sun pours light
as it is dragged, sliding bulk, quickly out of the ring,
getting, too late for the bull's appreciation, a grand ovation.

1922

Why not pull a tiger's tail ?

Why not love a tiger ?
They do not care.

Tigers naughty slinking boys
murderous and supreme
snarling indignant arrogance of servility
to a sure and cautious trainer.

Why not pull a tiger's tail ?
They are cold
And love bloodthirstily
A Bengal Tiger velvet sulphur purple
gliding to snarl at a Spanish tango.

Why not love a tiger madly ?
affectionate sensuous brothers
arrogantly ashamed
with tender sharp paws
of claws

jocundly playful claws
eyes cringing before the trainer's pistol

Why not pull a tiger's tail ?
Cuddle against a tiger's warmth ?

They are so murderous in amour.

1922

How variously in France
life utilizes the café girls
who with such natural an artificiality
decorate many occasions.

They become concierges, seamstresses,
brothel inmates, sailors' wives,
and what else ?—
carrying with them however, wherever,
their not to be spoken of as scrupulous
qualities.

Living as they do in animal wisdom
let it not be said that they possess
'the art of life'
since they themselves do not
so consciously stultify their activities.

They may sell cocaine,
and do not let ideas interfere
with solving the economic needs of life
yet they have their taste for clients
who are 'toujours délicat'
or 'vraiment gentil'.

Playfully as white rats
they seek naturally to insinuate themselves
into the affections of their erstwhile lovers,
and surely as birds,
indifferently as charmingly graceful
exhibitionistic animals,
and as purely free from high intention,
they serve their scene,
which can not possibly be

simple, or too tender, or over kindly.

Human jewels of glass,
of semi-precious or of even precious stone,

these girls,
Colette, Denise, Lola, Nini,
Kiki, Sporty, Reine, Suzy,
and the rest,

may be seen in their moments of glory,
when indiscreet
with anger, avarice, or jealousy—
but forever, righteous in the heat of indignation—
flesh has broken through the flush
of their tinted ivory
public identities ;

then they are the other says in combat,
 "vulgar" "grossiere" "mechante"
 but nevertheless, still

crested screamers
 in a jungle of electric lights

soon to return from empasioned flesh
 that in noway recollects parrots

back to their indentities
 as bird jewelry
 butterfly flowers
 or as carved and tinted figurettes.

THE BROTHERS

The one is a genius ;
 at propaganda,
 and at getting to the public.

The other has great power
 to organize and execute
 business enterprise.

He does not give a damn about public welfare or opinion
 except as they effect
 his mania
 for commercial success.

There is in him no desire
 for personal publicity
 such as has been a constant fever,
 a malady of fire raging
 in the brother.
 He, the genius,
 has all the fever and blind force
 which that disease engenders.
 He, unlike the other,

does not understand all one can say
 even to refuse to long consider
 because it does not suit his ends.

His scope of comprehension

is narrowed for attainment
 as he can recognize it.
 They quarreled because of this,
 for the blinder force,
 interfered with capital accumulation.
 The hysteria of power in both
 would not let either feel
 the tentacles of old age
 breaking them in its octopus embrace.
 Each is a phenomonon,
 a faith to himself
 a question and an answer.
 but now
 that both are old,
 and ailing,
 one with an illness rumoured to be mental,
 Now,
 that tension
 of power desire is relaxing
 dimming to vagueness and unreality
 Both
 are desolate figures.
 Neither knows
 how to communicate with people
 other than to direct them,
 and all whom they encounter

are not to be directed.
 But they still survive,
 believing yet, if only through need
 to authenticate their talents.
 Opportunism is ideal enough, forever, for them,
 and for anyone
 competing with destiny,
 with public and individual opinion.
 All other ideas are orchids, parasite growths,
 luxuries, impractical,
 sublimated, and prejudiced with hope.
 Life is existence,
 food, sleep, propagation,
 the evidence of energy,
 and what else ?
 Phantasy,—and power, a dream.
 They can not long outlast
 senility.
 That is a fever
 without enough throb
 for their high vitality
 caught at however low a moment.

CONTEMPORARY IRRITATIONS
AND DIDACTICS

LAW

(1920)

is not as music,
clear music,
as a flute above white snow
after the cry of flying geese
has died in the wild sky.

Nor has it a clarity
of austerity indutibly perceptive ;
nor like water,
or the sky in sunlight cleansed by rain.

Rather like two ambitious social sisters
is it, and its twin, Religion,
who, taking good flesh and fact as basis,

bedeck themselves,
 wear taste and refinement
 like spangles and glass beads,
 and chatter profoundly on life and love
 and art and ethics,

knowing so well the fashion journals,
 and what is being thought,
 and what is not said and done.

LANDSCAPE

before such as which
 Mona Lisa smiled
 in lechery not so much enigmatic
 as refined

how shall one denote you please the eye ?

The sun burning upon you
 is not essentially of beauty
 nor is it even aware of glory as a function.

Nature smiles across the hillsides
 as Mona Lisa smiled,
 maddeningly subtle,
 smiling with patronizing invitation
 to come and take but not to expect
 equality in response.

No,
 then not at all do I adore you, nature,
 full as you are of meaning
 that you do not make understood.

JUSTICE TO ALL NATIONS

Some English voices

belonging to those Britishers
who travel, living in pensions
or moderate priced hotels

whose lives consist mainly
of coming downstairs from upstairs
and going upstairs from downstairs
after a little conversation,
of seeing "views"
and taking "perfectly jolly" walks

as they converse of people and things
who are "so boring"
"so extraordinary" or "such a nayce boy"

such voices are damnable.
They compete in their irritating effect
only

with American voices
which, having a nasal can-twang
are too vivacious for words to say
how go-gettingly full of pep they are.

"O you Chicago !
Europe is just too adorable
and we ain't mad at nobody,
but

O you United States !"

PRINTED
AT DIJON - FRANCE
BY
MAURICE DARANTIERE
M. CM. XXVI